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## what can I do to help?

Here are a few things you can do  
to ensure Ontario's wastes are  
reduced, reused and recycled:

- I Before you buy, carefully read the label. Look for products and packaging that contain recycled - preferably post-consumer recycled - materials and are recyclable themselves. Choose durables and refillables. Refuse overpackaged disposables.
- I Compost your kitchen scraps, lawn and garden trimmings. There are composter models for every sized family, including units that will fit on your balcony. Your municipality may be offering them at cost.
- I Join the do-it-yourselfers that are recycling some 700,000 litres of motor oil through drop-off depots at more than 300 local car service centres each year.
- I Use your Blue Box. Contact your municipal public works office for a complete list of the recyclables being handled in your community.
- I Don't throw that away. Repair it and use it again. Hold a garage sale. Sell it to a secondhand store or scrap dealer. Or donate it to a local charity, hospital or crisis centre. Somebody out there may be able to use your old clothes, books and magazines, furniture and appliances.



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PIBS 3342

3342

# waste



## how are we doing



Ministry of Environment  
and Energy

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# We all have questions

producing more  
waste these days?  
or less?

is the Blue Box  
program working?  
will we do with  
garbage we can't  
reuse or recycle?

what are we doing  
to solve Ontario's  
waste-related  
environmental  
problems?

For more than 20 years, the Ministry of Environment and Energy has worked with industry, municipalities, local groups and individuals to find the answers to our most crucial environmental questions. Together, we have celebrated some notable successes. And together we must face and overcome some difficult challenges.

Responsible waste management means everyone has a role to play. The ministry monitors how Ontario handles its solid and hazardous wastes. We have forged innovative partnerships with the private sector to voluntarily cut solid wastes in half by the year 2000. We approve and oversee recycling, treatment and disposal operations, and we enforce the environmental laws of the province. This brochure describes how we are doing and what still needs to be done.

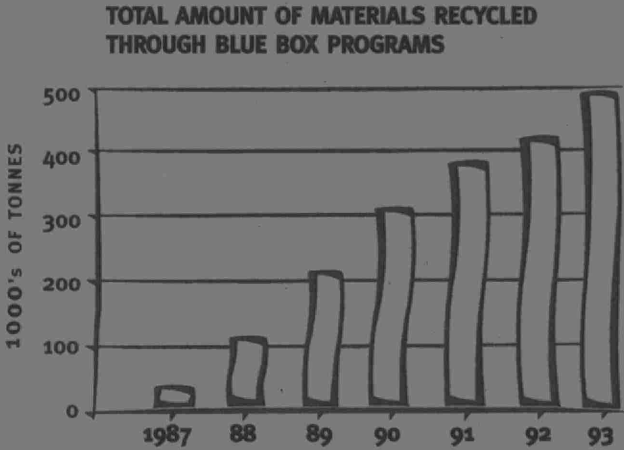
what is waste?

Most people think of anything they no longer want for and discard. However, materials in our garbage are misplaced resources. A lot can be avoided entirely. Of the rest, some can be reused, some can be recycled. Only the unusable leftovers should be called waste, and these, usually, end up at approved landfills.

We must re-examine what is waste. In industrial, office and home trash for the valuable materials they contain. Every time we reuse or recycle, we are extending the useful life of Ontario's resources. More importantly, we are conserving Ontario's resources, saving energy and protecting our shared environment.

# are we producing more waste? Or less?

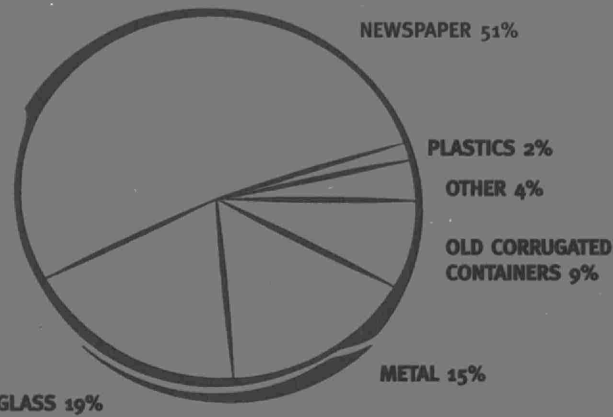
We are all much less wasteful these days. In less than five years, Ontario has managed to cut the solid wastes we produce each year by 25 per cent, from about one tonne per person to three-quarters of a tonne. Working together, the residents of Ontario have proven that the 3Rs of waste reduction, reuse and recycling really work and we should be able to slash our wastes in half by the turn of the century. The 3Rs are already paying environmental dividends. The cardboard and newsprint we recycled in 1993, for example, preserved more than 10 million trees in Ontario's forests.



## does using my Blue Box really make a difference?

It sure does! You and more than 3.2 million other households are putting at least some of your recyclables into a Blue Box every week. It all adds up. In six years, the amount of solid waste being diverted through this curbside collection program has jumped almost 17-fold. In 1993, 494,000 tonnes of newsprint, bottles, cans and other materials — representing about 15 per cent of all our residential wastes —were collected for recycling.

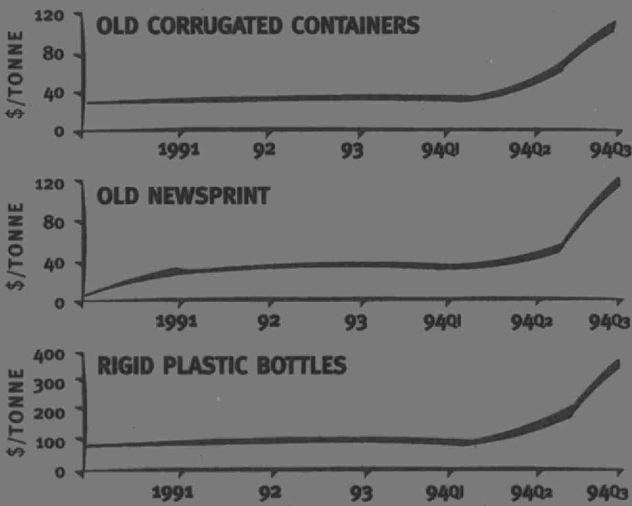
PERCENTAGE OF MATERIALS COLLECTED IN BLUE BOXES BY WEIGHT (1993)



## and are those Blue Box wastes really being recycled?

Virtually all of the materials collected in Ontario's Blue Boxes are being reused or recycled into new products. In fact, the markets for used newspapers, cardboard, aluminum, cans and many plastics have never been stronger. Ontario

is currently recycling about 50 per cent of all the newsprint used, 80 per cent of the cardboard and 40 per cent of the scrap steel. The recovery and sale of valuable Blue Box materials is helping support municipal waste reduction programs.



## can all our wastes be recycled?

No matter how effective our recycling programs, there will always be some leftover or residual waste. However, we've had great success in building strong recycling markets for many materials that used to end up in landfills. We are now working with industry on ways to divert old tires, construction materials, a wider variety of plastics and other useful resources from disposal. We are also committed to transforming hundreds of thousands of tonnes of food scraps, leaves and yard wastes into valuable compost. More than 800,000 backyard composters have been distributed across the province and larger composting facilities are being set up in more than 100 communities.

## what can I do with my toxic wastes?

From unwanted paints to used motor oils to dead batteries, your home can be a significant source of hazardous waste. Special waste collection days, local drop-off depots and "toxic taxi" programs help keep hundreds of tonnes of household hazardous waste from being poured down the drain or tossed in the trash. Many residents are eliminating toxic products by buying or making their own environmentally friendlier alternatives.

## what is industry doing with theirs?

Pollution prevention is the first step in any prudent waste management plan. It's also good business. Simple process changes can reduce expensive waste disposal charges. Many valuable materials can be recovered from the waste stream, while others can be replaced with less dangerous ingredients. More than 150 companies have taken Ontario's Pollution Prevention Pledge and are working voluntarily to slash the release of toxic chemicals in half

by 1995 and by 90 per cent in the year 2000. The pollution prevention planning partnerships we have established with seven industry sectors are also making a difference. By the end of 1994, 40 projects launched by Ontario's car makers will eliminate forever nearly 4,000 tonnes of waste a year.

In many cases, one company's trash can be another's raw materials. The non-profit Ontario Waste Exchange helps link waste generators with companies that can use their unwanted stocks and recyclable by-products.

## what about the toxic wastes that can't be recycled?

We are working on those too. Ontario offers technical and financial help to companies developing, testing and launching innovative 3Rs technologies. We are buying environmentally friendly products, supporting new markets for recycled materials. And we are fast-tracking the approval of mobile recycling and treatment systems that will bring state-of-the-art technology right to the plant gate.

In the meantime, Ontario has "cradle to grave" safeguards in place to track the more than 160,000 shipments of hazardous wastes made annually. Comprehensive regulations cover the storage, transport and handling of the 1.2 million tonnes of acids, dirty oils and other hazardous materials shipped off-site to treatment, recycling and disposal companies.

## what are the challenges for the future?

Ontario's 3Rs regulations will help divert as much as two million tonnes of valuable materials from your wastes by the year 2000. That's equivalent to 200,000 truckloads. All municipalities with more than 5000 residents will be providing recycling and backyard composting services, while those with a population larger than 50,000 will be diverting leaf and yard waste through community composting programs. In addition, major packaging users and designated large industries, commercial operations and institutions are required to implement effective programs to cut their solid wastes.

We are also bringing the 3Rs right to your door. Under the Green Communities Initiative, the province, municipalities, local businesses and environment groups are working together to offer home green-up audits, water and energy saving programs, and other environmental-friendly efforts.